PUBLIC OPINION

IN ZIMBABWE ABOUT THE UNITED NATIONS

The UN Department of Public Information commissioned a public opinion poll in Zimbabwe to assess the awareness, knowledge and image of the UN. The poll was carried out during March-April 1991.

THE RESULTS IN BRIEF

- Six out of ten Zimbabweans are familiar with the United Nations and almost a third are able to identify the UN Secretary-General.
- Awareness and knowledge about the UN is highest among college-educated respondents, and among those who have access to a radio or television set.
- Forty-two percent of those surveyed believe the Organization is doing a good job, while five percent give the UN a poor rating.
- The majority of Zimbabweans surveyed are interested in all UN issues. The Organization's work in the field of housing is at the top of the list.

AWARENESS OF THE UNITED NATIONS

FIGURE 1

AWARENESS AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE UN

Sixty per cent of Zimbabweans have heard of the United Nations. Awareness is highest among those respondents with a college degree (near 100 per cent awareness), and among those who have access to a radio or television set. Awareness is lowest among older respondents, and the rural population.

Fourteen per cent of Zimbabweans are able to name a UN institution or body. The UN institutions or bodies most mentioned are the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the Security Council, UNEP, GATT and UNIDO.

Knowledge of the UN is significantly higher among college-educated respondents and among those who listen

ABILITY TO NAME A UN INSTITUTION

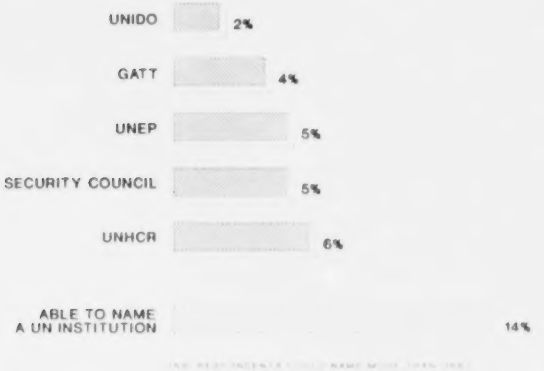


FIGURE 2

UN PERFORMANCE RATING

FIGURE 4

IDENTIFYING UN SECRETARY-GENERAL

FIGURE 3

to English-language radio. Among these groups, more than half are able to correctly identify at least one U N body or institution.

IDENTIFICATION OF THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL

Thirty-one per cent of Zimbabweans are able to identify Javier Pérez de Cuellar as the current Secretary-General from a list of five U N Secretaries-General since 1945.

The groups that tend to more correctly identify the current Secretary-General are those who possess a college degree, those who listen to English-language radio, and those who have access to a television set.

RATING UN PERFORMANCE

By a margin of eight to one, Zimbabweans believe that the UN is doing a good job as opposed to a poor job. This positive evaluation is found among all demographic groups, although respondents in the higher income bracket, urban dwellers, those who are college-educated, and users of radio and television give higher evaluations of the UN. Older respondents give slightly lower evaluations of the UN.

REASONS FOR UN PERFORMANCE RATING

Asked to give reasons why the UN is doing a good job, Zimbabweans mentioned the Organization's role in the recent Gulf crisis, although this reason is also dominant among those who criticized the UN. Aid to poor people and to developing countries, and the role of the UN in famine relief efforts, were also mentioned.

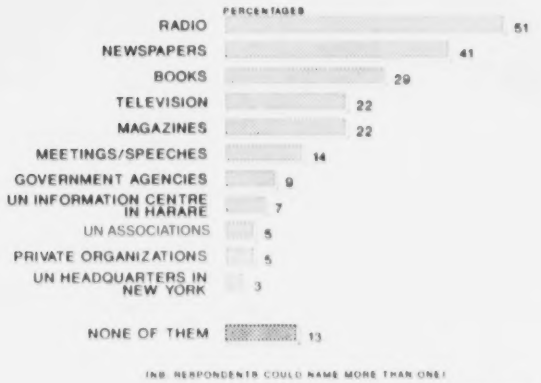
The major reason for rating the Organization's performance as poor is the perception that the UN is unable to promote world peace and/or solve conflicts. The most mentioned conflicts are the Gulf crisis, the Palestinian question, and the situation in Angola. Some respondents also refer to what they perceive as inefficiency in discharging UN services.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Fifty-one per cent of Zimbabweans cite radio as a source of information about the United Nations. This is followed by newspapers, books and television. Fourteen per cent mention meetings and/or speeches. Seven per cent mention the UN Information Centre in Harare as a major source of information about the UN.

Eighteen per cent of Zimbabweans recall being taught about the UN at school. In most cases, teaching about the UN takes place in high school.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON THE UN



(NB: RESPONDENTS COULD NAME MORE THAN ONE)

FIGURE 5

TEACHING ABOUT THE UN

FIGURE 6

INTEREST IN UN ISSUES

Most Zimbabweans appear interested in all UN issues. The Organization's activities in the fields of housing and international peace and security are of greatest interest to Zimbabweans.

Generally speaking, there are no significant differences among various demographic groups in terms of expressed interest. However, female respondents were almost twice as likely as male respondents to express interest in receiving information about UN activities dealing with equal rights for women.

CONCLUSION

Approximately two thirds of Zimbabweans have heard of the United Nations, and about one third are able to correctly identify the current Secretary-General.

Their opinion about the UN is generally favourable. Positive attitudes about the Organization appear to focus on the UN's role and the humanitarian actions undertaken in the recent Gulf crisis.

The media play a significant role in how Zimbabweans learn about the UN. Radio is the most used medium. The UN Information Centre in Harare is an important direct source of information about United Nations activities.

For more information, contact the Programme Evaluation and Communications Research Unit,
Department of Public Information, United Nations, New York, N.Y. 10017
Phone (212) 963-6872, Fax (212) 963-6601

INTEREST IN UNITED NATIONS ISSUES

	VERY INTERESTED	SOMEWHAT INTERESTED	NOT INTERESTED
IMPROVING HOUSING CONDITIONS	84	10	6
INT'L PEACE AND SECURITY	81	13	6
CHILDREN'S ISSUES	78	15	7
HUMAN RIGHTS	78	15	7
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION	76	16	8
THE WORK OF THE UN IN GENERAL	76	16	9
CRIME PREVENTION	75	17	9
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	74	17	9
WORLD FOOD PROBLEMS	73	17	9
DISARMAMENT	73	16	12
AIDS	73	11	16
APARTHEID IN SOUTH AFRICA	72	14	14
AFRICAN ECONOMIC RECOVERY	71	18	11
REFUGEES & DISASTER RELIEF	70	19	10
TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT	69	20	11
DECOLONIZATION	68	19	13
RACIAL DISCRIMINATION	68	15	17
POPULATION ISSUES	67	21	12
DRUG ABUSE	65	15	20
EQUAL RIGHTS FOR WOMEN	61	17	22
INT'L LAW & TREATIES	57	26	17
NEW WORLD INFORMATION ORDER	54	26	20
INT'L DEBT CRISIS	52	26	22

FIGURE 7

HOW THE POLL WAS DONE

The poll was commissioned in co-operation with the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), and was conducted by Research International East Africa (RIEA). Representatives from RIEA interviewed a nationwide representative sample of 2,500 men and women aged 16 and over. The interviews were carried out face-to-face in respondents' homes during four weeks in March-April 1991. Over eighty per cent of the initially selected sample successfully completed the interview. The margin of sampling error is estimated at ± 3 per cent.

The Programme Evaluation and Communications Research Unit of the United Nations Department of Public Information undertakes public opinion polls to "analyse trends of public opinion throughout the world about the activities of the United Nations and the extent to which an informed understanding of the work of the United Nations is being secured" (General Assembly resolution 13(I), annex I, paragraph 13 of 13 February 1946).